

## Rescued by hovercraft

● A MAN who waded out into the Thames Estuary off Westcliff, threatening to take his own life sparked an operation involving Southend coastguard, the RNLI, the Essex Police helicopter and the ambulance service

The 35-year-old man, who is thought to be local, was spotted walking over the mud.

The inshore lifeboat was called and the RNLI hovercraft was sent to take three police officers out to the man.

A police spokesman said: "He was taken aboard the hovercraft and carried back to the shore, where he was put into an ambulance and taken to Rochford Hospital for assessment."

The police helicopter was launched, but was turned back when the man was rescued by the RNLI.

## Support for epileptics

● EPILEPSY sufferers their relatives and friends are invited to a support group meeting next week.

South East Essex Epilepsy Support Group meets on Monday at 7.30pm, at the Naval and Military Club, in Royal Terrace, Southend.

Information about the condition and its effects will be available and there will be a chance to ask questions, get literature and to talk to others in a similar situation.

For details, call branch chairman Peter Hall, on 07711 905198 or e-mail [peter.jhall@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:peter.jhall@tiscali.co.uk) or secretary, Glynis Whiteman, at [glyndw@googlemail.com](mailto:glyndw@googlemail.com)

## Meeting on homelessness

● SOUTHEND Homelessness Action Network is organising a meeting at the Plaza Centre, in Southchurch Road, next Wednesday.

Anyone with concerns about homelessness in the borough invited to meet local church activists and representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

For more details about the meeting, which starts at 11am, call 01702 616302 or e-mail [jjandm.barber@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jjandm.barber@blueyonder.co.uk)

● WESTBOROUGH Residents' Association will meet at the British Legion Club, in Northview Drive, Westcliff, on Friday, September 17 at 7.20pm. For details, call Brenda Smith on 01702 351936.

# LAND OFFERED



■ Watching – police outside the Selex Sports and Leisure Club site

## Police promised to shift vans – then let them stay

TRAVELLERS evicted from the Hovefields site, in Wickford, are now camped a few miles away and could stay there for some time.

A convoy of five caravans and vans was said to have broken through locked gates and into an overspill car park at the Selex Sports and Leisure Club, in Gardiners Way, Basildon.

Its arrival came hours after evictions began to clear seven illegal plots at Hovefields.

Police were called to the site by the social club and the travellers were originally expected to be removed by police by noon yesterday. However, they were still there last night.

Andy Bennett, a committee member at the social club, said: "They broke through a chain and padlock to get in. They were with a man called Grattan Puxon, who said the Homes and Communities Agency had given permission for them to be on the land, but it is not true. The agency leases the site to Selex."

Mr Bennett said when travellers first arrived, police were reluctant to act. Selex Systems then secured an order requiring them to leave by noon and officers said they would be moved if they did not go of their own accord.

Later more supporters arrived on site, determined to help the travellers stay put.

Ann Kobayashi, 70, of Haslemere Road, Wickford, and



■ No action – after promising to evict travellers from the Selex Sports and Leisure Club site, police let them stay in the end

Zelda Jeffers, 62, from Basildon – both of whom were removed from Hovefields on the first day of the eviction – were among those who went to Gardiners Way.

They told police the legal notice, authorising officers to move travellers on, included a human rights clause, which obliged police to consider people's welfare.

They argued children on the site should not be able to face the trauma of two evictions in as many days.

At 2pm officers visited the area again, but did not speak to

travellers. A police spokesman later confirmed: "We do not propose to take any action in respect of the unlawful encampment, but we may do so some time in the future."

She refused to discuss the reason the original eviction deadline had been allowed to pass.

Mr Puxon said travellers had moved to the site because of discussions with landowner, the Homes and Communities Agency, over the possibility of setting up legal sites on its land.

He blamed the council for the

## COUNCIL: IT'S NOT DOWN TO US

BASILDON Council has denied failing to do enough to stop evicted travellers moving on to private land in the area.

Council leader Tony Ball said it had taken action to protect council-owned land, but stressed it was not the council's job to safeguard private land.

If travellers broke into private property it was down to the police and landowners to remove them, he said.

However, he conceded the council could have given landowners advice on precautions to take to secure land ahead of the evictions.

fact the travellers had moved on to private land.

He added: "People have been forced to do this, as there is nowhere else for them to go, other than car parks."

"We have tried for years to find an alternative solution, but the council did not listen."

However, the agency stressed it had not given specific permission for travellers to move on to any of its land yet and would take appropriate action to move them on.